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Dr. Lynn Spraggs
Ultra Information Systems
8604 Kalavista Dr.
Vernon, BC V1B 1K3
CANADA

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MAY 19 2003

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

ON PETITION

In re Application of :
Spraggs :
Application No. 09/554,419 :
Filed: May 11, 2000 :
Attorney Docket No. PA1065US :
For: SYSTEM AND METHOD OF SENDING :
AND RECEIVING SECURE DATA WITH A :
SHARED KEY

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed April 8, 2003, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Petition under 37 CFR 1.137." This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to properly reply to the final Office action, mailed July 3, 2002. Petitioner filed an amendment after final on October 21, 2002 (certificate of mailing date September 27, 2002). The amendment after final failed to place the above-identified application in *prima facie* condition for allowance, as was stated in the October 30, 2002 Advisory Action. This application became abandoned on October 4, 2002. On November 7, 2002, the Office granted a request by the attorneys of record to withdraw from representation. On January 21, 2003, a Notice of Abandonment was mailed.

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by (1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof; (2) the petition fee as set forth in § 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in § 1.20 (d)) required pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section. This petition does not satisfy requirements (1) and (3).

Regarding (1) above, petitioner has not filed a proper reply. The amendment after final, filed October 21, 2002 (certificate of mailing date September 27, 2002), did not eliminate all of the Examiner's objections and rejections. It did not place the case in *prima facie* condition for allowance. In any reconsideration petition, petitioner must submit one of the following: (1) a Notice of Appeal, (2) a continuing application, or (3) an RCE and submission.

Regarding (3), the showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a). Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where

petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, telefacsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

The Commissioner may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable". 35 USC § 133. Decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887)(the term 'unavoidable' "is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business"); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (D.C. Cir. 1912); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r Pat. 1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition to revive an application as unavoidably abandoned cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing the cause of the unavoidable delay. Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

In the instant case, petitioner has failed to provide adequate evidence that the delay was unavoidable. Petitioner asserts that the entire delay was caused by the former attorneys of record withdrawing during the period that a critical filing was due.

Petitioner is reminded that under 37 CFR 1.36 and MPEP 402.06, attorneys may withdraw from representation as long as there is at least thirty (30) days remaining between the date of approval of the request and the later of the expiration date of a period to file a reply to an outstanding Office requirement or the expiration date of the maximum period for extension under 37 CFR 1.136(a).

In the instant case, the Office granted the former attorneys request to withdraw from representation on November 7, 2002. Petitioner could have bought extensions of time to reply to the July 3, 2002 final Office action until January 3, 2003, but petitioner did not do so.

Even after petitioner's attorneys withdrew from representation, it remained petitioner's responsibility to continue prosecution.

Petitioner's Amendment After Final, filed October 21, 2002 (certificate of mailing date September 27, 2002), failed to eliminate all of the Examiner's objections and rejections, as was stated in the Advisory Opinion of October 30, 2002. The rules of practice are clear that prosecution of an application to save it from abandonment must include such complete and proper action as the condition of the case may require. The admission of an amendment not responsive to the last Office action, or refusal to admit the same, shall not operate to save the application from abandonment. See 37 CFR 1.116(a).

The application became abandoned because petitioner/petitioner's representatives did not submit a proper reply to the final Office action within the extendable period for reply.

A delay resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP does not constitute an "unavoidable" delay. See Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (N.D. Ind. 1987), Vincent v. Mossinghoff, 230 USPQ 621, 624 (D.D.C. 1985); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (1891).

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is dismissed.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Petitioner should consider filing a petition stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an "unintentionally" abandoned application without a showing that the delay in prosecution or in late payment of an issue fee was "unavoidable." This amendment to 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) has been implemented in 37 CFR 1.137(b). An "unintentional" petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the \$ 650.00 petition fee.

The filing of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revival under 37 CFR 1.137(b). For petitioner's convenience, a blank copy of PTO/SB/64 -- Petition for Revival of an Application for Patent Abandoned Unintentionally under 37 CFR 1.137(b) is enclosed.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Mail Stop PETITION
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (703) 308-6916
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Office of Petitions
2201 South Clark Place
Crystal Plaza 4, Suite 3C23
Arlington, VA 22202

Telephone inquiries pertaining to this matter may be directed to the undersigned at (703) 308-6712.



E. Shirene Willis
Senior Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions

enclosures: blank PTO/SB/64 -- Petition for Revival of an Application Abandoned
Unintentionally under 37 CFR 1.137(b)

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